



New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

Manual:	CP&P	Child Protection and Permanency	Effective Date:
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Cooperation between CP&P and State and County Medical Examiners 4-4-2005

CP&P has entered into an agreement to enhance cooperation between CP&P field offices and support staff, the State Medical Examiner and county Medical Examiners when investigating child abuse and neglect fatalities.

The agreement between CP&P and the State and county Medical Examiners calls for timely information sharing by all parties, both verbally and in writing, and is sensitive to the Division's need to reach out to siblings and other children who may be at risk if left in the care of an offending parent or caregiver. The Division's Central Office, the State Central Registry, and each Local Office and Area Office have named liaisons to respective Medical Examiners to facilitate joint cooperation. See [a copy of the agreement and a list of Medical Examiners](#).

The State Medical Examiner's Office is located in the Department of Law and Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, and has general supervision over all county medical examiners statewide. The Office operates under N.J.S.A. 52:17B-86.

CP&P and county Medical Examiners share information by telephone when investigating a child death case. Documents may be forwarded by facsimile machine for a timely exchange of information.

CP&P is permitted to share information with the Medical Examiner, a "law enforcement agency authorized to investigate a report of child abuse or neglect," in accordance with N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10a (b). See [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#). Medical Examiner records are created, maintained, and controlled in accordance with N.J.A.C. 13:49-3.1a and b. When both CP&P and the Medical Examiner investigate a child death, the availability of Medical Examiner records to outside parties may be limited by N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10a (a), the confidentiality statute.

When State Central Registry receives a call from a county Medical Examiner's Office, the SCR Screener provides information from CP&P records to assist the Medical Examiner to assess the presenting situation, including:

- whether the family is known to CP&P, and, if known, whether it is active, under investigation for another incident/reason, or closed at present;
- the nature of any prior CP&P involvement with the family, and whether that involvement was of a child protective or child welfare service nature; and
- answers, to the greatest extent possible, to specific, case-related questions posed by the Medical Examiner.

If CP&P is unable to obtain information from the county Medical Examiner, contact the State Medical Examiner for assistance.

The county Medical Examiner advises CP&P whether an autopsy is being conducted, and whether preliminary information indicates the cause of the child's death may have been due to abuse or neglect. A CP&P Medical Consultant can request to attend the autopsy and/or discuss pertinent clinical information with the Medical Examiner according to the agreement.

The county Medical Examiner coordinates information sharing with the County Prosecutor when the child's death is or may be the subject of a criminal investigation. See [CP&P-II-C-4-200](#). Although the county Medical Examiner may share the results of an autopsy with CP&P, the written autopsy report may be withheld from CP&P when:

- the child death is the subject of a criminal investigation, and
- the County Prosecutor requests that the autopsy report not be shared with any party.

Consult the DAG if an autopsy report is needed as evidence in a civil court proceeding brought by CP&P.

Agreement of Cooperation Between the Division of Child Protection and Permanency and the State and County Medical Examiners 9-2-97

This agreement of cooperation between CP&P and the State and county Medical Examiners was developed at the request of the Child Death and Critical Incident Review Board to enhance cooperation between CP&P field offices and support staff, the State Medical Examiner and county Medical Examiners when investigating child abuse/neglect fatalities. The Division's Central Office, the State Central Registry, and

each Local Office, and Area Office have named liaisons to respective Medical Examiners to facilitate joint cooperation.

The county Medical Examiner coordinates intervention and information sharing with the County Prosecutor when the child's death is or may be the subject of a criminal investigation.

Lists of county Medical Examiners and CP&P liaisons are attached to the agreement. The agreement was signed by the Directors of CP&P and the Division of Criminal Justice and the State Medical Examiner. Each county Medical Examiner throughout the state also signed a copy of the agreement.